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F O R T U N E S    W A S H E D    A W A Y

"L-H CLUB TERRACING"

Broadcast No. 51 in a series  
of discussions of soil con-  
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

April 15, 1939 6:45-7:00 p.m.

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder and rain...

ALLISON

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ALLISON

Of all youth organizations, most activities in America center round the farm, and for good reason. The soil is the basis of life itself, and mother's kitchen is the business center of domestic life. On the farm exists a common brotherhood of crop production and housekeeping. With these thoughts in mind, a far-sighted superintendent of schools in Wright County, Iowa, began club work in rural communities back in 1905--clubs designed to teach through doing. Today, more than a million of American boys and girls are active in 4-H club work. Dear to every 4-H club member is the pledge...

CHORUS OF VOICES

I pledge...my head to clearer thinking,  
my heart to greater loyalty,  
my hands to larger service, and  
my health to better living, for  
my club, my community, and my country.

ALLISON

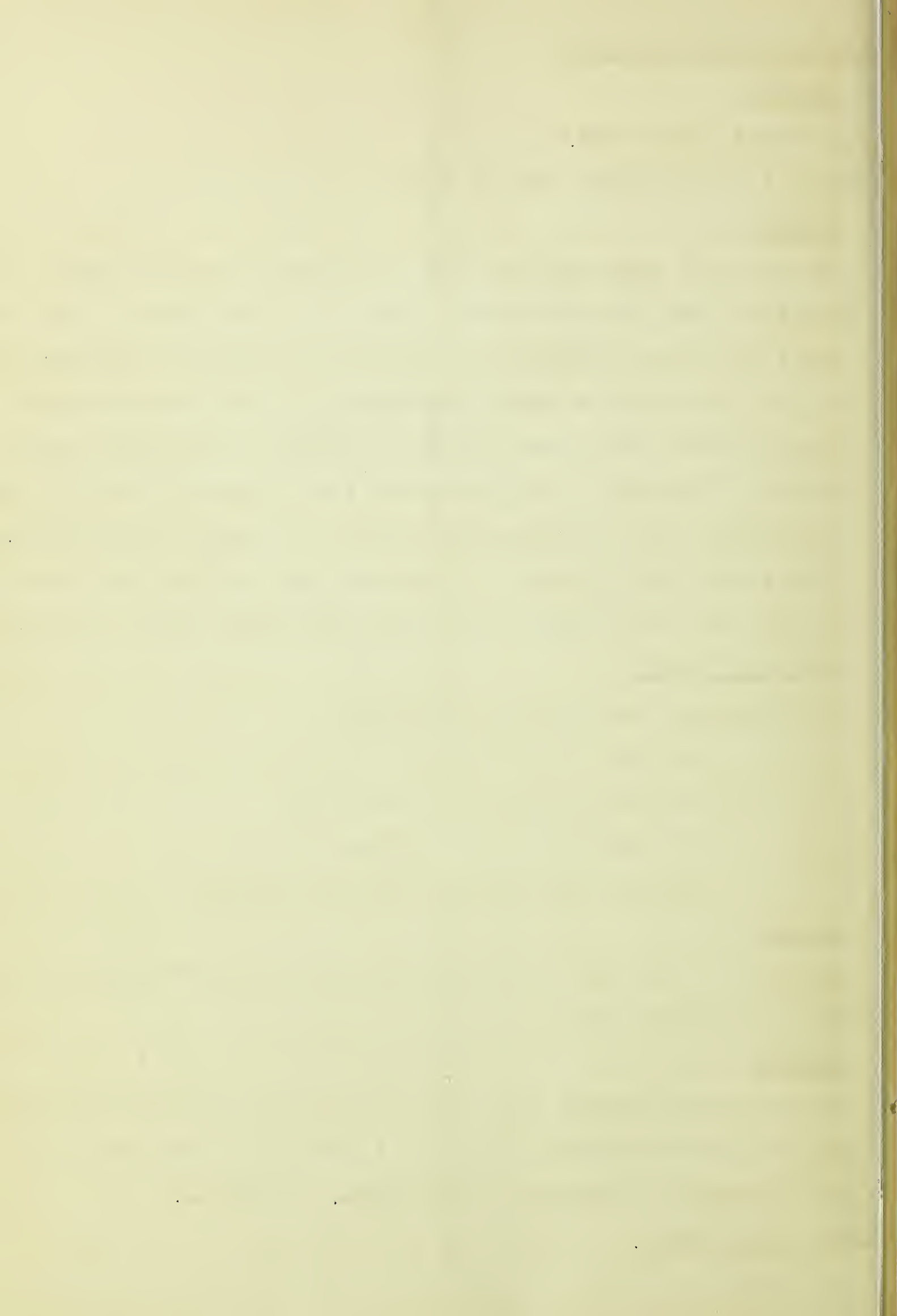
And dear to every 4-H club member is its familiar "Ploughing Song."

ORGAN: A PLOUGHING SONG.

ALLISON

Popular among Kentucky farm boys is the annual 4-H club terracing contest, conceived back in 1927 by a newcomer to the faculty of the University of Kentucky, Earl Welch. One day...

SOUND: Door opens.



KELLEY

Oh, hello, Earl. Come on in.

SOUND: Door closes.

WELCH

Thanks. Why, Professor Kelley, I've got a little brainstorm that I'd like to unload on you.

KELLEY

Fine! A good brainstorm now and then never hurt anyone. What's this one?

WELCH

I've been thinking about working up some 4-H club activities here in Kentucky, and I believe I've got one that's downright practical. It has to do with erosion control.

KELLEY

If it has to do with erosion control, it's bound to be practical. I'll tell you, these soils of ours just seem to get up and say goodbye every time we have a rain. A lot different than it was in the days of Daniel Boone.

WELCH

Well, I heard about some contests they were having down in Texas... contests on terracing.

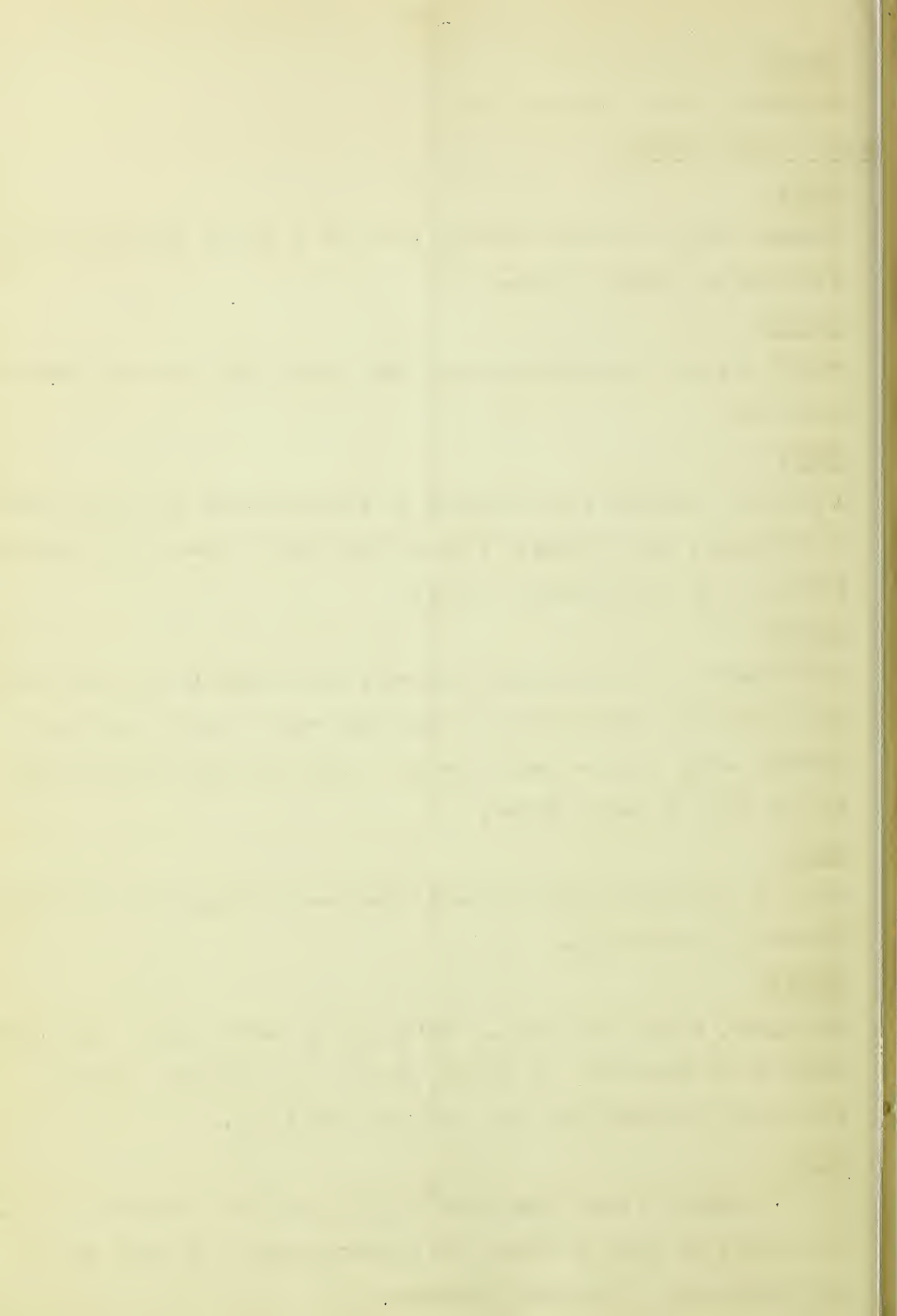
KELLEY

Hmm...yes, I see your point. We've got an awful lot of land that ought to be terraced. I wonder, though, if terracing isn't a little too involved for boys of high school age.

WELCH

I don't think it will take them long to get onto the swing of it. Of course, we ought to start out rather slowly. My idea was to have some sort of an essay contest....







KELLEY

You mean, something like "Why Kentucky Farmers Should Terrace"?

WELCH

Yeah, that's it exactly. Maybe eventually we can branch out to have them actually build terraces, maybe even include other types of erosion control.

KELLEY

Possibly so. Terracing does seem the logical place to start.

WELCH

That's what I think. I have seen a lot of terracing that was not effective because the terraces were poorly constructed and because some of them weren't maintained. I think we ought to start right now showing Kentucky farmers how to build a good terrace, and how to maintain it, and the place to start is with the boy. He'll be the farmer of tomorrow.

KELLEY

All right! Let's go to it, Earl. You draw up the plans, and I'll give you all the help I can. I'll talk to Dean Cooper and Professor Roberts about it, too. Let's go to work!

ORGAN: A PLOUGHING SONG.

ALLISON

That was more than ten years ago. Encouraged by Earl Welch and other members of the University of Kentucky staff, county agricultural agents developed an increasing interest in 4-H club terracing projects. One of these projects was in McCracken County. An 18-year-old farm boy, Clayton Barker, member of the Reidland 4-H club, was in school when....



TEACHER

Clayton Barker, you're wanted in the principal's office at once.  
You're excused from the remainder of the class.

BARKER

Yes, sir.

SOUND: Subdued whispers and taunts, such as "now you're going to catch it," etc.

SOUND: Door opens and closes.

HURT

Say, you're Clayton Barker, aren't you?

BARKER

That's right.

HURT

Why, I'm Joe Hurt, the county agent.

BARKER

Yes, sir, I thought I knew you. But will you excuse me? I'm wanted in the principal's office.

HURT

And I'm the one who wanted to see you--not the principal.

BARKER

Oh, boy! What a relief.

HURT (laughing)

I didn't mean to scare you. Why, Clayton, here's what I wanted to talk to you about. You're pretty much interested in agriculture, aren't you?

BARKER

I sure am. I own some sheep and cattle and hogs, all by my own.  
I guess I'll go to the University when I finish high school.



HURT

I hope you will. But getting down to business, you've heard about the 4-H club terracing contests, haven't you?

BARKER

Yes, I read about them. Some boys from Grayson County won last year, didn't they?

HURT

Yes, but this year I want McCracken County to win it, and Holmes Ellis...you know him, the assistant county agent....Holmes says that you're just the boy that can do it.

BARKER

But, gosh, I don't know anything about terracing. Now, if it was about bee keeping...

HURT

Holmes will give you plenty of help. Do you know of another boy who would make a good team mate?

BARKER

Well....there's Thomas Pierce. He's pretty active in 4-H club work. I imagine he can work with me...if he gets his homework done first.

HURT

All right. You see Thomas, and talk it over with him. Remember this, Clayton. You'll be competing with a lot of boys from other communities. Some of them have already held preliminary contests and picked the winners. But you get to work--and I want to see you win.

ORGAN: A PLOUGHING SONG.





ALLISON

Famed is the American gold rush, a westward surge for gold and riches. Not famed, but tragic in its implications, is the American soil rush. For the hardy pioneer, bursting with robust energy, rushed across the nation, sweeping trees and grasses and soil before him. And where the trees once stood, hordes of gullies scar the landscape, monuments to the soil rush, monuments to man's soil wastage. Kentucky is primarily an agricultural state and boys like Clayton Barker and Thomas Pierce, boys who believe in conserving the soil, are working to preserve that agricultural wealth. And they did work...

PIERCE

Boy, am I tired. But we finally got the terraces built.

BARKER

And we've won the county contest. Those boys from Heath Community were plenty smart, too.

PIERCE

Yeah, but we just had more experience. We not only laid out the terraces, but helped build them, and then checked them afterwards. You know, Clayton, we learned a lot since we entered this county terracing contest.

BARKER

I'll say we did. I'm beginning to see, now, just how important it is to stop this soil washing.

PIERCE

You bet. Some of those farms over there in Marshall County are just about gone.





BARKER

It's a cinch that some of those men never read that bulletin the Extension Service put out.

PIERCE

You mean, that one Mr. Ellis gave us, "Soil Erosion and Its Control"?

BARKER

That's the one. Before we go to the state contest Junior Week, we ought to read all we can. When we get up there, we'll have to do a lot more than just set up a level and stake out a terrace line.

PIERCE

Yeah, we'll have to answer about 50 questions on soil erosion and terracing. And here's one that I hope they ask me.

BARKER

What's that?

PIERCE

I hope they ask me, "Thomas, why are you so interested in soil conservation?"

BARKER

What'd you say?

PIERCE

I'd say, "Mr. Brooks, I'll just tell you what I heard an old farmer say once. All of the land that we have is what has been left by those who have gone on. We're living on the leavings. Even now, you see some men burning over their fields. You see them running their crop rows up and down hill. You see them plowing steep hills that the Lord meant to be in grass and trees. And if you grew up here, like I did, it would cut you to the heart."

ORGAN: A PLOUGHING SONG.



ALLISON

The story of Clayton Barker and Thomas Pierce has barely begun. The present chapter has a happy ending. For in 1938, they won the state-wide 4-H club terracing contest, and they believed in the value of their work. And these 4-H club boys reflect the earnest spirit shown by thousands of future farmers of America--the knowledge that we have been given one of the richest and most beautiful pieces of land to tend. We have taken terribly poor care of it. Now we must settle down, and take care of our own, and live as sensible people should.

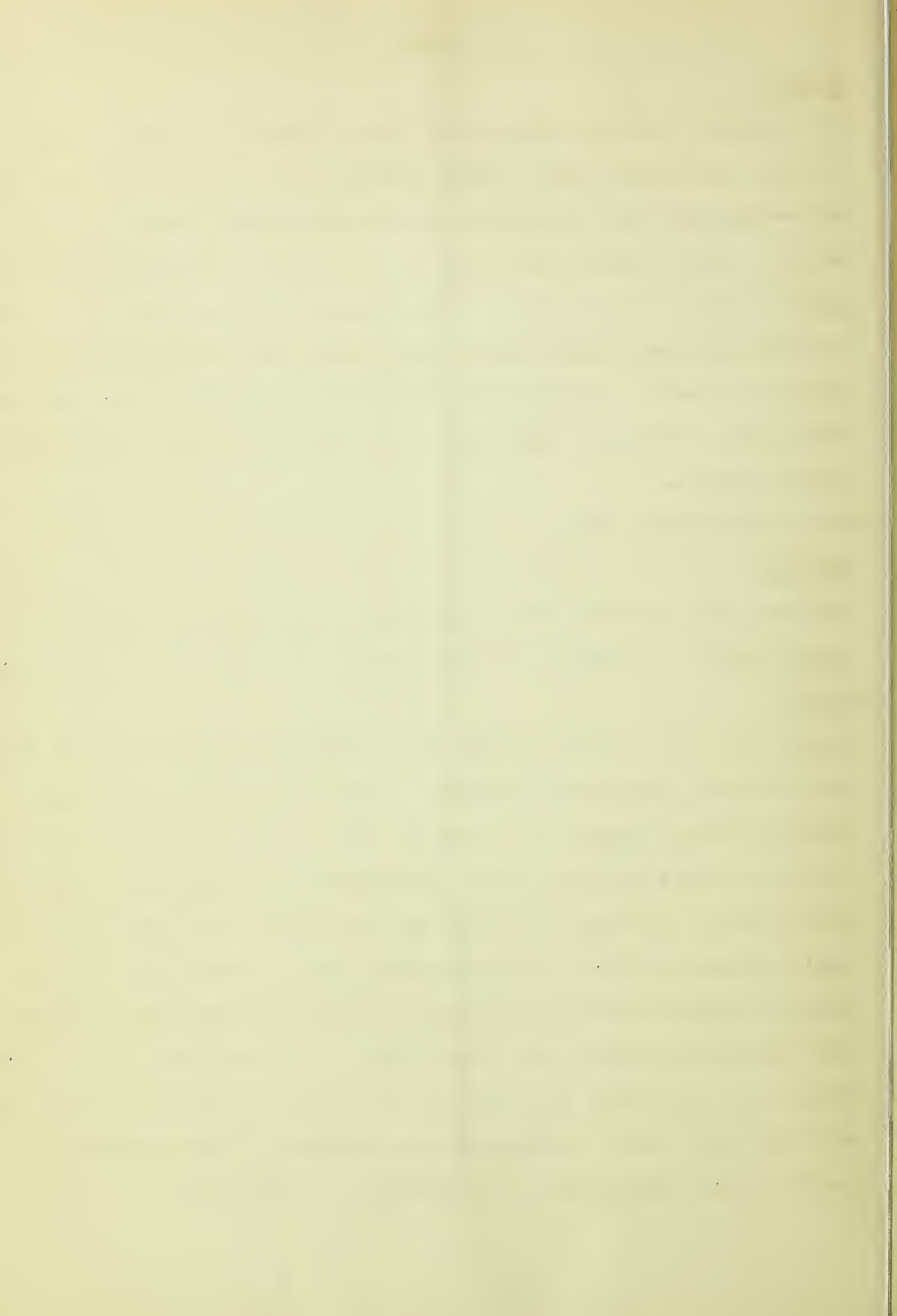
ORGAN: A PLOUGHING SONG.

ALIISON

And now, once more we turn to the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and here is Ewing Jones.

JONES

Thank you, Paul Allison. Just as terracing has become one of the most popular soil-saving methods, so has the 4-H club terracing program become popular in Kentucky. Of course, Professor James B. Kelley and Earl G. Welch of the University of Kentucky are primarily responsible. They've had wonderful cooperation from the many county agricultural agents. In recent years, J. B. Brooks has been in charge of agricultural engineering projects for 4-H club members, and he's been carrying the ball. Well, both Earl Welch and J. B. Brooks are here with us today, so I'm going to ask them to tell us a little more about terracing in general, and these contests in particular. Earl, what's the latest on the contests?





WELCH

Just a minute, Ewing. I think you've given me a little too much credit. The credit really goes to the county agents and their assistants, and to the boys who have the energy and the foresight to take part in these contests.

JONES

And what progress are you making in this year's contest?

WELCH

Very good. More boys than ever before have entered. The assistant county agents started training the boys around April 1, and J. B. Brooks and the 4-H club department are holding district training schools next week at Mayfield, Madisonville, and Lexington. J.B., why don't you explain how this year's contest has expanded?

JONES

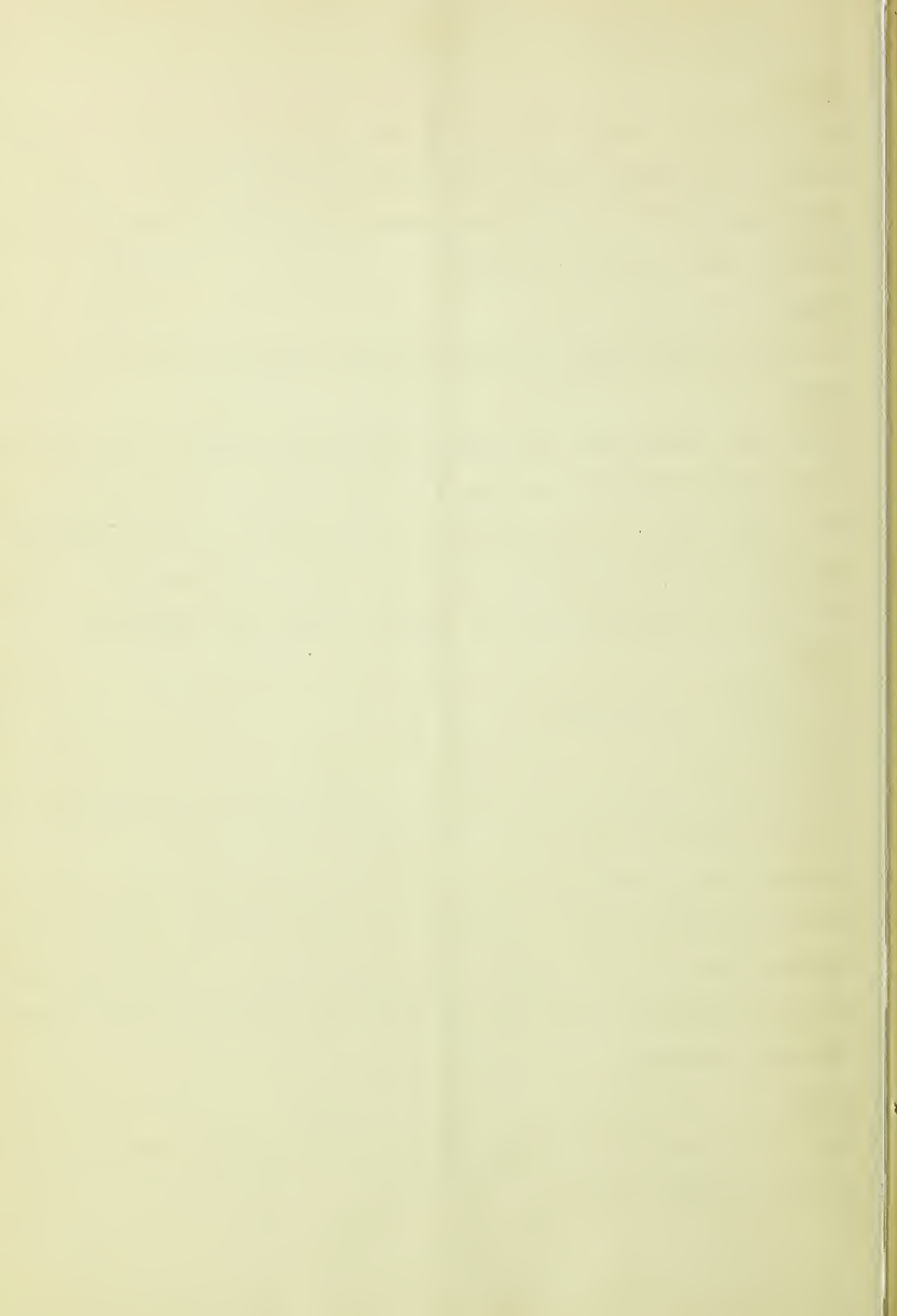
Yes, that's a good idea.

BROOKS

This year's contest is designed to give the boys a full picture of erosion control. For theory, the boys study up on the entire problem. They read the University of Kentucky bulletin, "Soil Erosion and Its Control." And at the final contest at Lexington, they're given a general quiz on the broad field of soil conservation. In practice, they learn how to test and adjust farm levels and such matters.

JONES

Then they cannot only lay out terraces, but contour lines for contour tillage as well.





BROOKS

That's right. You see, Ewing, one of the nicest things about these contests is that more future Kentucky farmers every year learn not only how to build terraces, but how important it is to save the soil.

WELCH

And they put that knowledge into practical application. I know of some boys who were in the contests years ago, who have terraced entire farms since that time.

JONES

In a way, these contests are like the soil conservation courses given in most of the CCC camps. The boys actually carry back to the farm information that will help them save their soil. And I suppose McCracken County will have another entry this year.

BROOKS

Yes, Barker and Pierce are training two other boys for this year's team. They'll compete with other boys in their community, and with boys from other communities, for the privilege of representing the county at Lexington.

JONES

How about that report that the Grayson County team made out last year, Mr. Welch? That shows that 4-H club boys actually put into practice what they learn.

WELCH

The report went something like this: "We have laid out about 10,000 feet of terrace lines which have been built and are in good shape. On our farm we have planted 3 beds of locust trees which we intend to set out on 800 acres of steep land.



JONES

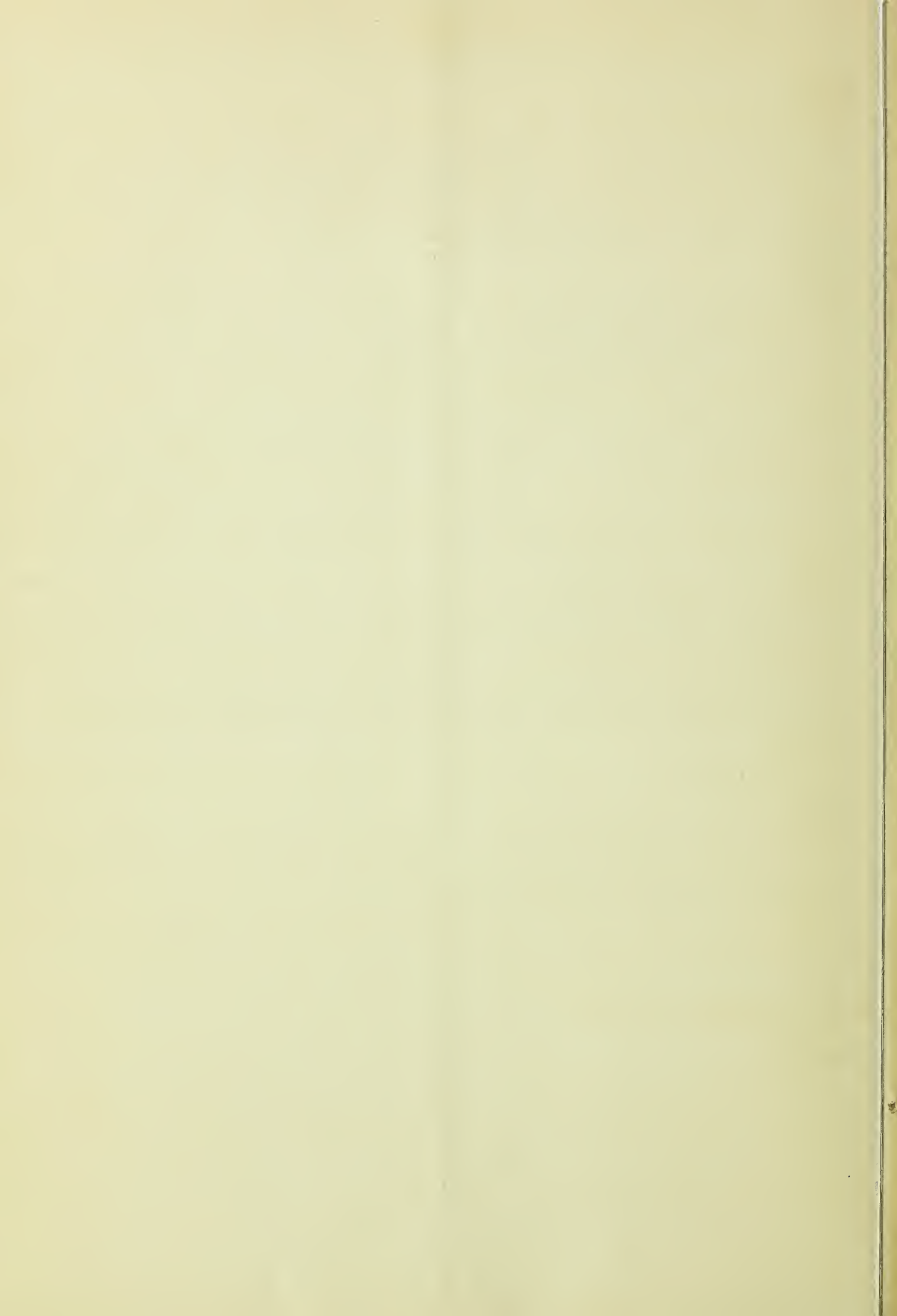
Now, let's get down to terracing itself. We've just touched lightly on terrace maintenance. Mr. Brooks, suppose I were a farmer. What would be your advice in that line?

BROOKS

That 's a big order, Ewing, but here's part of it. The success of terraces on cultivated land rests upon the man who farms the land. During the first year after construction, when the ridge and fills are settling, terraces should be inspected after every heavy rain. Where breaks occur, they should be properly and promptly repaired. If you carry a shovel when you are inspecting the terraces, you can repair the slight breaks as you come to them. Maintenance plowing can be done with a regular farm plow, and is very simple, once the right procedure is learned. Summing up, the secret of successful terrace farming is being eternally on the lookout for breaks in the terraces.

JONES

I'll remember that. And, Mr. Welch, as your parting shot, is there anything you want me to remember?



WELCH

Remember this, Ewing. Not all land is suitable for terracing. As a general rule, terraces should be constructed only on fairly long, gentle slopes, with deep soil. But if you have a good system of terraces, properly maintained and with suitable outlets, you'll be just like a farmer down south. He terraced his land recently, and here's what he said: "I was away from the farm when the terracing was started. When I returned and saw them winding around over the field, I felt just like I did the first time I closed my mouth after my teeth were extracted. But when I saw those same terraces full of water during a hard rain, I wouldn't have taken \$100 for them."

JONES

All right, thank you very much, Earl G. Welch and J. B. Brooks, of the agricultural engineering section of the University of Kentucky. And, Paul Allison, I'll thank you if you'll say that...

ALLISON

If you would like a copy of the bulletin, "Terracing for Soil Conservation," or the bulletin, "Soil Erosion and Its Control," write to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. The names of those bulletins again, "Terracing" and "Soil Erosion Control," and the address, Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. A penny postcard will do.

SOUND: Thunder and rain...

ALLISON

Next week, \_\_\_\_\_.

Fortunes Washed Away is a studio presentation of the agriculture department of the Nation's Station.

